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For Immediate Release

Date: July 23, 2013

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Celebrating Academic Success for Foster Youth

Madison—Monday, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) hosted a unique graduation party—Wisconsin's first annual Foster Youth Graduation Celebration, which was held at the Executive Residence. The celebration recognized former foster youth who recently graduated from high school or completed milestones in post-secondary education.

"This ceremony recognizes and honors the efforts these students have made to grow into positive and independent citizens of Wisconsin", said DCF Secretary Eloise Anderson. "These young men and women have shown the determination to better their own lives through education and are serving as role models for all of foster youths in the state."

Thirty-three graduates from across Wisconsin attended the celebration, from the more than 70 who reached commencement this year. While most of the students in attendance are celebrating their graduation from high school, two students are celebrating the completion of their Bachelor's Degree, and two students were celebrating successfully completing their Master's Degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

"It is important to celebrate their accomplishments, particularly since many will age out of the foster care system and be on their own after high school graduation," continued Anderson.

Youth in foster care often face significant obstacles in achieving academic success. Nationally, only 54% of foster youth will graduate from high school; only 2% will go onto college. Most suffer not only the loss of their biological family, but have had to face multiple foster home moves, changes in case workers and being uprooted from friends and schools. On average, foster kids will move 6 times between kindergarten and 12th grade.

"These students have beaten the odds and shown what it takes to be successful in school, which will help them be successful as they take their next steps in life," said First Lady Tonette Walker, who was one of the speakers at the event. "They all need to know how much we care about their future," Walker said.

Some of the youth at today's event are currently in foster care. Others have been through the foster care system and are now getting assistance through the Department's Independent

Living program, which offers services to teens that have “aged out” of foster care and are between the ages of 18 and 21.

For more information on Wisconsin’s foster care services or to find out how you can be a foster parent, please visit the Department of Children and Families website at: www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/children/foster/ or visit the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families website to learn more about the “Shelter from the Storm” campaign at www.fosterparentsrock.org.
